



*The Sinclair Community College Newsletter
designed to heighten the understanding of the integrated relationship
between curriculum, general education, and assessment
Winter 2006*

Notes from the VPI Office

*By Tom Huguley, Assistant Vice
President for Instruction*

What does AQIP (the Academic Quality Improvement Program which leads to NCA reaccreditation) have in common with the collective responsibility for assessment at Sinclair (curriculum, assessment, and general education)? The goal of AQIP is to infuse the principles and benefits of continuous improvement into the culture of the college in order to assure and advance quality higher education. The most important category for AQIP analysis is: HELPING STUDENTS LEARN. What do we do on a daily basis to make sure that our processes, results, and improvements are focused on helping students learn?

The Curriculum Management Tool (CMT) acts as a centerpiece for us to keep asking the question: how can we improve our curriculum and teaching, so our students have the best opportunity to learn? Isn't that really at the heart of HELPING STUDENTS LEARN? It's really a continuous improvement process of articulating outcomes, assessment tasks, and performance criteria for all courses which feed certificate and degree programs which

lead to jobs or transfer to a four-year college. It seems to me that this collective responsibility, which includes curriculum, assessment, and general education, is at the heart of our mission—HELPING STUDENTS LEARN.

So, AQIP means instilling a mentality of continuous improvement. And our collective responsibility for assessment means making sure that mentality is focused on HELPING STUDENTS LEARN.



Assessment and CMT

*By Teresa Prosser, Chairperson of the
Assessment Committee*

Sinclair has long had master syllabi for all of the courses offered here on campus. These master syllabi included such items as the course description, content topics, and course objectives. What they did not have were course outcomes and anything pertaining to assessment or general education!

As the need...and the requirement...to document assessment practices within

higher education grew, it became increasingly clear that our master syllabi were lacking. The question became: how do we embed and capture assessment and general education practices within our course curriculum? The answer came in the form of the Curriculum Management Tool (CMT).

This tool asks the chair and faculty to identify not just the course description and course content but also the course outcomes (no longer course objectives) and the assessment task(s), the performance criteria, the general education area, and the measurable general education outcome for each of the course outcomes. Finally, we as an institution can look across our courses and our programs and see where and how assessment is being practiced. The benefit is not just for the institution; it's also for the students and the faculty.

Through CMT, which posts the master syllabi on the internet, students can now explore, online and prior to registration, the content, outcomes, and assessment tasks and performance criteria which will be used to measure those outcomes. Faculty...especially part time faculty...can now review their responsibilities in these areas as well. This, in turn, provides much needed and desired consistency for students in their course performance and in their learning. Hopefully, this will lessen the discrepancies in students' learning between different sections of the same course, a critical factor especially in sequenced courses.

So, CMT is a wonder in its ability to close the loop on student learning by embedding assessment and general education within the development of curriculum...where assessment is an integral part of curriculum, not an afterthought.

Curriculum and CMT

By Sue Merrell, Director of Curriculum, Assessment, and Continuous Improvement

The Curriculum Review Committee, a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, is responsible for reviewing requests for new courses/modules/programs and revisions to existing courses/modules/programs. This committee consists of the six faculty members appointed by the President of the Faculty Senate for three-year terms and one chair appointed by the President of Chairs' Council for a three-year term. The chair of the Curriculum Review Committee is the Director of Curriculum and Assessment. In the fall quarter of 2004, the committee began to use a new application called the Curriculum Management Tool (CMT).

A curriculum proposal usually originates with a department chairperson and moves its way through a review/approval process which culminates in a final approval memo being issued by the Director of Curriculum and Assessment. In keeping with Sinclair policy, no new course or module may be offered and no substantive changes made to existing courses, modules or programs without the proper review and approval discussed in these guidelines.

CMT is a comprehensive software application that supports the initiation, revision, and approval of curriculum. Similar to its predecessor, Keyfile, CMT automates the business processes surrounding curriculum and helps people work more productively and cost-effectively. This software is used at Sinclair to expedite the curriculum process by reducing or eliminating the amount of paper and meeting time required for curriculum approvals. User guides and online help menus for CMT are available to support all users.

Through a web-based, database-driven design, CMT provides a user-friendly approach to curriculum. Importantly, this

tool connects to the college's database of curriculum to reduce the time and complexity experienced by the infrequent user. Sinclair's CMT debut occurred during the Fall Conference Professional Development Day in September 2004.

General Education and CMT

By Lori E. Zakel, Chairperson of the General Education Committee

So, by now, you know that there are a number of general education outcomes that we at Sinclair Community College say our students should have achieved upon their graduation with an associate's degree. However, if you are still not sure what the outcomes are, they can be found on page 67 of the college's 2005-2006 Course Catalog and are presented in rubric form (for assessment and evaluation purposes) in the forms section of the intranet. The General Education Rubrics may also be downloaded from both the General Education and Assessment websites.

Ah, but you may be thinking to yourself, "I don't teach a Gen Ed course, so it isn't anything I need to worry about." Well, not so fast.....

With the entry of all courses into the Curriculum Management Tool (CMT), what we (departments with associate degree programs) will be able to do is to look at the curriculum that has been determined for our programs and identify where the general education outcomes appear in the curriculum. The CMT provides that functionality. In other words, for every course offered at Sinclair, the appropriate general education outcomes that are part of that course will have been identified. More importantly, this will be the first time we will be able to see if there are general education outcomes lacking in the curriculum for our programs. This is clearly a valuable benefit. As a result, we will be able to make more informed decisions about the curriculum in the future.

Not only does our regional accrediting agency, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association (NCA HLC), require the inclusion of general education ("GIR 16: Its undergraduate degree programs include a coherent general education requirement consistent with the institution's mission and designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and to promote intellectual inquiry"), but it also expects institutions to "clearly articulate the expected outcomes of student learning that should be achieved in general education." The outcomes provide that clear articulation, and the CMT is able to show the occurrence of specific general education outcomes in our degree programs.

Additionally, it is stated by NCA HLC that the college should answer, "what are the specific learning skills/competencies expected of its students in their undergraduate general education experience?...The absence of well-defined outcomes and a thoughtful construct defining the role of general education leaves some institutions squabbling over which courses should be part of the undergraduate experience rather than what goals will be achieved through the curriculum." The advent of a Curriculum Management Tool that links general education outcomes to all courses has obvious connections here. Linking general education outcomes to every single course at Sinclair will help us to avoid some of the "squabbling" and help to soundly link the goals to be achieved through the curriculum. An added benefit will be to ultimately improve student learning: by seeing where general education outcomes are missing, department leaders will be able to add needed content to their programs. Does it get any better than that?



The Learning Liaisons

Many Sinclair faculty have indicated an interest in learning about assessment processes and systems as they are used throughout the college. In this issue the Learning Liaisons share an example of assessment from each of their divisions.

Gloria Goldman, Learning Liaison for Allied Health

In 1998, the faculty of the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program adopted ten core generic professional abilities and began a process to incorporate self-assessment of these abilities across the seven quarter curriculum.

The ten professional generic abilities are:

1. Commitment to Learning
2. Interpersonal Skills
3. Communication Skills
4. Effective Use of Time and Resources
5. Use of constructive feedback
6. Problem solving
7. Professionalism
8. Responsibility
9. Critical Thinking
10. Stress Management.

The expectation set by the faculty that these behaviors will be self-assessed and developed across the seven quarter curriculum, is introduced in a pre-requisite survey course. Faculty members, part-time instructors and senior students are used to role model behaviors. Once in the clinical environment, the clinicians and clinical instructors also role model and mentor the behaviors. This environment also services to provide a context for the application of the appropriate behaviors in therapeutic interventions. Both written documentation and verbal discussion are used each quarter, to help the student reflect on their progress, receive feedback and set personal developmental goals.

Lori Zakel, Learning Liaison for Fine and Performing Arts

The Design department conducts a summative assessment activity for graduating visual communications and interior design majors every spring. An evening is set-aside for employers to review portfolios that each student has created to document the variety and quality of design projects they have produced. Approximately sixty area professionals (judges) are invited to participate. Each student is scheduled to meet with three professionals and each professional assesses the work of three students. This "Spring Portfolio Review" is conducted in Building 12, judges are provided with dinner as the faculty reviews the evaluation process and explains the evaluation forms.

A standard evaluation form, used by each judge, contains a five-point scale and a section for general comments. The form has been aligned with each degree's program objectives. By using a computer scannable form, the department can evaluate student achievement of program outcomes in aggregate. Students receive verbal and written comments from the judges as well as individual summaries of the assessed areas. The input from the judges is not used in calculating the portfolio class grade. Students use the portfolio assessment for self-improvement. The department directs curriculum improvements based on the areas of strength and weakness as evidenced by the aggregate scores.

Art Ross, Learning Liaison for Liberal Arts and Sciences

As a reader of this article, you're probably wondering how to integrate meaningful assessment techniques into one's existing teaching assignments. Let me share an example with you. Recently, I assessed an exam on which my students performed poorly. I had some ideas on the causes of the poor results but wanted to create a packet that I could give to my colleagues for

their thoughts on improvements as well as support the assessment of course and general outcomes. The assessment packet for this exam included, copies of all scored student exams, copies of the objectives and competencies for the exam, and an informational coversheet. The coversheet includes some basic course information and assessments of every exam problem. The individual problem assessments map preparatory course activities to the problem and ranks their strengths and/or weaknesses. Recommendations for future improvements are also made. Our department is investigating methods to archive reduced versions of these packets in an electronic knowledge database. This approach will make these assessments available for a wide variety of future assessment analyses.

Respectfully, Art Ross

Steve Wendel, Learning Liaison for Engineering and Industrial Technologies

Assessment is part of our Engineering and Industrial Technologies divisional continuous improvement plan (CIP) template. This template serves as the basis for the continuous improvement process for each program in the division. Nine programs within our division were recently visited and accredited by Technology Accreditation Commission (TAC) of ABET.

ABET, Inc., is the recognized U.S. accreditor of college and university programs in applied science, computing, engineering, and technology. Accreditation ensures the quality of the postsecondary education students receive. ABET was established in 1932 and is now a federation of 28 professional and technical societies representing the fields of applied science, computing, engineering, and technology.

Through the hard work and dedication of more than 1,500 volunteers, ABET currently accredits some 2,700 programs at over 550 colleges and universities nationwide. ABET also provides leadership internationally

through agreements such as the Washington Accord, and offers educational credentials evaluation services to those educated abroad through ECEI.

Sinclair programs receiving TAC of ABET accreditation include:

- Civil Engineering Technology
- Electronic and Computer Engineering Technology
- Environmental Engineering Technology
- Heating and Air Conditioning Engineering Technology
- Industrial Design & Graphics Technology
- Industrial Engineering Technology
- Mechanical Engineering Technology
- Quality Engineering Technology
- Safety Engineering Technology

Linda Pastore, Learning Liaison for Extended Learning and Human Services

Mary Connolly reports for Linda Pastore that the Early Childhood Education Program recently completed an assessment cycle. ECE 281, Student Teaching II, is the capstone course for the program. Evaluation data, based upon the ECE program outcomes, was collected through the rubrics on the ECE 281 students' final evaluation form. This form was completed by the student, the cooperating teacher, and the college instructor, offering an opportunity for triangulation of data. The rubric scores were compiled and analyzed as a part of the ECE Program assessment.

ECE faculty analysis of this assessment data determined that one program outcome relating to working with families of young children consistently received a slightly lower score than the other outcomes. During the process of curriculum review and revision, the ECE faculty decided to include aspects of working with families in all ECE courses, as appropriate, in addition to the required ECE course *Building Family and Community Relationships*. The teaching of

the revised ECE curriculum began Fall Quarter, 2005. The assessment process will continue with the collection of data to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum revisions.

Ned Young, Learning Liaison for Business

It became apparent to the Marketing and Management department faculty that their degree and certificate seeking students did not have full understanding of program outcomes until the capstone course. This would be much like going into a restaurant, helping the chef prepare a meal but not seeing the full meal until it was cooked! The faculty was also concerned with integrating more formative assessment methods in order to better assess whether program outcomes were being integrated into the various courses.

The faculty decided to develop a rather simple instrument now called the Course Completion Assessment or CCA. The CCA is administered, at the end of selected courses, to students. Each student is presented with the program outcomes that apply to the specific course, and then each student is asked to comment on how the course did, or did not, contribute to each of the outcomes.

With this feedback, the individual course faculty member can assess whether there are areas where different forms of instruction or pedagogy may be necessary and the degree to which changes are necessary. From a program standpoint, the entire department faculty can assess the contribution level of individual courses to satisfying program outcomes as well as a more summative analysis of the overall coverage of outcomes across the curriculum.

One added advantage for the student is that each can “collect” his or her CCAs (throughout the entire program) and use these as he or she develops the capstone course portfolio.

A relatively simple and quick method that has provided important assessment information!



2006 Spring Institute

There will be multiple sessions related to assessment, general education, and curriculum development at the 2006 Spring Institute. Register online at <http://our.sinclair.edu/sites/dlis/profdev/>.

Assessment 101

Wednesday, March 22

9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

Ned Young & Steve Wendel

Have you ever wondered where you were in terms of your assessment understanding and practice? The Assessment Committee has developed two tools which allow individuals as well as groups to make that kind of determination. Intended to encourage effective discussion and introspection, these tools will form the discussion basis of this workshop. Participants will receive copies of these tools as well as experience in using them for their own purposes and/or their departments.

Assessment 102

Wednesday, March 22

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Mary Connolly

This workshop will provide examples of cross-disciplinary assessment techniques; studying and evaluating the specific assessment tools in Sinclair’s Curriculum Management Tool (CMT); choosing assessment tools and techniques for particular outcomes/courses. Participants are encouraged to bring copies of course outcomes for a course they would like to assess. They will be able to work on the development of an assessment plan for particular outcomes within that course.

Incorporating & Measuring General Education Outcomes in Any Class

Thursday, March 23

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Lori Zakel & Art Ross

At this workshop, participants will learn how and when to use general education rubrics in their classes. General education outcomes occur throughout all of the classes, and should be assessed periodically throughout a student's program of study for purposes of evaluation and improvement. By the end of the workshop participants will have a plan to incorporate at least one general education outcomes rubric into at least one class.

Collaborative Curriculum Connections: Working Together in CMT to Strengthen Student Learning

Thursday, March 23

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Sue Merrell, Teresa Prosser, Gloria Goldman

This workshop is restricted to department chairpersons and their designees who are interested in incorporating assessment into their courses. During this session, chairpersons and faculty will write measurable course outcomes, identify associated assessment tasks, determine performance criteria, and align course outcomes with General Education outcomes. Using Sinclair's new Curriculum Management Tool (CMT), participants will initiate course revisions that include clearly written outcome statements and associated assessment plans.

Additional Resources

Sinclair's websites

CMT: <http://cmt.sinclair.edu/security/login.cfm>

*click on guest login at bottom on page

AQIP: <http://www.sinclair.edu/about/aqip/index.cfm>

Assessment: <http://www.sinclair.edu/about/assessment/index.cfm>

General Education: <http://www.sinclair.edu/about/gened/index.cfm>

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Assessment